

Telemarketing fraud is really one of the most dastardly types of crimes in this country. The bill will do a lot to enforce that law and to make much tougher punishments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLING). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1847, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

# EXPRESSING SENSE OF THE HOUSE THAT NATION'S CHILDREN ARE ITS MOST VALUABLE ASSET AND THEIR PROTECTION SHOULD BE HIGHEST PRIORITY

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 154) expressing the sense of the House that the Nation's children are its most valuable assets and that their protection should be the Nation's highest priority.

The Clerk read as follows:

## H. RES. 154

Whereas the Nation's most valuable and vulnerable asset is its children;

Whereas their protection should be one of our highest priorities;

Whereas over 1,000,000 children are reported missing, and over 100,000 attempted nonfamily abductions take place every year;

Whereas over 750,000 children under the age of 18 disappear for some length of time every year;

Whereas law enforcement officials constantly encounter crimes against children;

Whereas sex offenders are nine times more likely to repeat their crimes than any other class of criminal;

Whereas nearly two-thirds of State prisoners serving time for rape and sexual assault victimized children; and

Whereas while many missing children are returned to their homes, many others are exposed to danger and exploitation: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That—*

(1) all Members of Congress should take appropriate action to ensure the safety and protection of children in their jurisdictions;

(2) State governments should have in effect laws which register offenders convicted of sexual crimes against children and laws which require law enforcement to notify communities of the presence of these offenders;

(3) States should have in effect laws which severely punish individuals convicted of offenses against children, especially crimes involving abduction, sexual assault, exploitation, and stalking;

(4) law enforcement agencies should take the necessary steps to safeguard children against the dangers of abduction and exploitation; and

(5) State and local law enforcement agencies should work in close cooperation with Federal law enforcement to ensure a rapid and efficient response to reports of child abductions, especially in cases where a child's life may be in danger.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] and the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. DELAHUNT] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MCCOLLUM).

## GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the legislation under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

House Resolution 154, introduced by the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. COLLINS] expresses the sense of the House regarding the safety and protection of our Nation's children. On May 25 we observed National Missing Children's Day, a day established by President Reagan in 1983 to raise public awareness about the need for increased child protection. This resolution, prepared in connection with National Missing Children's Day, is a declaration by this Congress that child abduction is a very serious matter and that we intend to work with State and local law enforcement to ensure that effective and appropriate measures are in place to prevent crimes against children.

Justice Department statistics indicate that over 1 million children are reported missing each year. Over 100,000 abductions of children are attempted by nonfamily members annually. This resolution includes these and other statistics in its findings, in addition to providing that States should have in place laws which severely punish individuals convicted of offenses against children. The resolution declares that law enforcement agencies should take steps necessary to safeguard children against the dangers of abduction and exploitation and should work in close cooperation with Federal law enforcement to ensure a rapid and efficient response to reports of child abductions, especially in cases where a life may be in danger. Losing a child is a nightmare which becomes a reality for too many Americans. I would like to commend the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. COLLINS] for his efforts and I urge my colleagues to supported this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution declares that protection of children should be our highest national priority. I certainly do not intend to take issue with that sentiment as the father of two wonderful daughters. I frankly cannot imagine any Member of this House taking issue with it.

However, I do recognize that it is important from time to time for the Congress to reaffirm even such self-evident truths. I commend the author of the bill, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. COLLINS] for doing so.

How the States choose to protect our children is, of course, another matter.

This resolution does not actually require the States to do anything. For that reason, it was reported favorably by our committee without dissent. But it does urge States to take various steps which the authors of the bill favor, including the adoption of laws that require the registration of convicted sex offenders, and severely punish those who commit offenses against children. Most of the States already do those things. But again I recognize that it is sometimes useful for the Congress to encourage the States to do what they are already doing.

Given so much harmonious agreement, it seems out of place to strike a discordant note, but there is something that does trouble me about this resolution. What troubles me is the implicit assumption that the people responsible for local law enforcement have more to learn from the Congress than we have to learn from them. I know from my own experience in law enforcement that this is simply not the case. If communities around the country choose to adopt these kinds of measures, it will not be because Congress thinks they should. It will be because they have determined that these measures are the best way to protect their children for whom they are responsible. If they do not do so, it will not be because they care less about their children than we do; it will be because they have chosen other means which they think would be more effective within their communities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, once we have affirmed our concern for the well-being of America's children, I hope we will remember the many other things that threaten them. Things like malnutrition, lack of education, inadequate health care.

Unlike local law enforcement, these are things that we can do something about.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the author of this bill, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. COLLINS].

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Massachusetts and the gentleman from Florida for both their recognition of how important it is at times for us to remind ourselves and to remind our State and local officials and also our law enforcement officials of the importance of our children and to remind them, too, that we are all concerned and very interested in their protection.

As the father of four and the grandfather of six and, by the way, Mr. Speaker, I put my request in to my four children hopefully to get a baker's

dozen of those grandchildren, I recognize the importance of love and protecting our children, our most valuable asset.

Therefore, I rise today to offer a resolution referencing the importance of our Nation's children. Amidst all the talk of balanced budgets, taxes and entitlements and their importance, too, to our children, we often overlook the need to protect what truly is the most priceless resource in this country, and that is our children. But like any other valuable, our children's safety is often threatened. Losing a child is a nightmare which has become a reality for far too many Americans. In fact, a recent study conducted by the Princeton Survey Research Associates indicated that the number one fear of 54 percent of the parents who responded is that their child might be kidnapped. And while most missing children are returned to their homes safely, many are exposed to the evils of exploitation.

The gentleman from Florida [Mr. McCollum] referred to several statistics released recently by the Justice Department. A couple of those statistics are that more than 300,000 children are abducted by family members each year and that nearly two-thirds of our State prisoners serving time for rape and sexual assault victimized children and that sex offenders are nine times more likely to repeat their crimes than any other criminal.

Mr. Speaker, our law enforcement agencies are constantly faced with the difficult task of stopping crimes against children, and Congress has done a commendable job in recent months with the passage of two acts, one the Megan's law which gives citizens the power to educate themselves with sex offender registration information and, two, the Sexual Offender Tracking Identification Act, which aids law enforcement officials in tracking down threats to our children.

Both these measures are a good start but there is much work to be done yet. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer House Resolution 154, which expresses the sense of Congress that the Nation's children are its most valuable resource and that their protection should be our Nation's highest priority.

House Resolution 154, as reported earlier, also urges local and State governments to take appropriate action to ensure the safety and protection of children within their jurisdictions and to severely punish offenders of such crimes. I would like to recognize the diligent efforts of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. McCollum], the ranking member, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Hyde] and the other members in the leader's office for their help with this measure. I urge my colleagues to join me in passage of this resolution.

Mr. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida [Mr. McCollum] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 154.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### WAIVING MEDICAID ENROLLMENT RULE FOR BETTER HEALTH PLAN OF AMHERST, NY

Mr. PAXON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2018) to waive temporarily the Medicaid enrollment composition rule for the Better Health Plan of Amherst, NY, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2018

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. WAIVER OF 75/25 MEDICAID ENROLLMENT RULE FOR BETTER HEALTH PLAN, INC.

Effective July 1, 1997, the requirement of section 1903(m)(2)(A)(ii) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396b(m)(2)(A)(ii)) is waived, for contract periods through December 31, 1998, with respect to the Better Health Plan, Inc. operating in New York.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York [Mr. PAXON] and the gentleman from New York [Mr. ENGEL] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York [Mr. PAXON].

Mr. PAXON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. PAXON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAXON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2018, legislation I offered along with my colleagues from New York on the Committee on Commerce. Our legislation is but a small piece of legislation but it is absolutely vital to many Medicaid recipients in the State of New York.

Better Health Plan, based in my district in Amherst, New York, needs an extension of their 75/25 waiver which expired on June 30, 1997. The 75/25 rule requires that any Medicaid managed care plan enroll at least 25 percent of their patients from the private sector. Without this legislation, Better Health Plan would be forced to disenroll thousands of Medicaid recipients. These recipients would face a disruption of their health care, and Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow this to happen. The 75/25 rule would be eliminated under the President's proposed budget as well as the congressional budget plan. Unfortunately the budget bill was not signed into law by June 30 of this year. Therefore, we need to take quick and decisive action on H.R. 2018.

I must also point out that the New York State Department of Health and

Better Health Plan were hoping the State's 1115 Medicaid waiver would be approved by this time. Approval of the 1115 waiver would have provided relief without the need for congressional action. Unfortunately, we were told by HCFA that a decision on the 1115 rule waiver would not come before June 30, 1997.

It is because of this that I offer H.R. 2018 today and ask that my colleagues quickly approve this legislation so that Better Health Plan may continue to provide quality health care to Medicaid beneficiaries, as they have since 1994. Better Health Plan is a Medicaid prepaid health services plan approved by the New York State Department of Health. At present, Better Health Plan operates in New York City and 11 counties across the State of New York. Better Health serves over 41,500 individuals of which 36,700 are Medicaid recipients.

I received a letter from the New York State Department of Health verifying that mandated surveys have been conducted by the State and there have been no quality-of-care deficiencies with Better Health Plan.

Therefore, before I close, I would like to thank my colleagues, the gentlemen from New York, particularly Mr. ENGEL, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. MANTON, and Mr. LAZIO who have all been helpful in bringing this legislation to the floor. I would also like to thank the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. BLILEY] and his staff for their prompt attention to this situation. It is because of this bipartisan effort that we will ensure that Medicaid patients in New York City/State will continue to receive quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1630

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I join with my friend and colleague, the gentleman from New York [Mr. PAXON], in strong support of H.R. 2018.

Let me say, as he has said, the five members of the Committee on Commerce from New York all strongly support the bill. Indeed, the Committee on Commerce passed the bill unanimously by voice vote. This, as the gentleman from New York said, would grant a waiver for the Better Health Plan from the 75-25 rule.

The Better Health Plan covers people throughout New York State, mostly northern New York, but also in the city of New York as well, and the 75-25 rule states that any Medicaid HMO plan must have a minimum of 25 percent participation from non-Medicaid enrollees. This rule has been eliminated in the Medicaid portion of the budget reconciliation measure.

However, as was pointed out, the budget plan has yet to be enacted and, because of that, Better Health must now begin disenrolling patients unless the bill before us is enacted. Better